3523-31 Ann.
Meridian, Miss.

WAYNE COUNTY

THOMAS HUTCHINSON, SUPERINTENDENT

The observations which follow, applicable to the school operations of Wayne County, have two bearings, general and particular_general first. "Wayne county is one of the oldest and poorest in the State. Its soil, with the exception of here and there, limited spots, is naturally very sterile and unproductive. Age and extent of territory considered, its population is sparse, and wealth small. Heretofore, as the rule, education has only followed the accumulation of wealth--one in proportion to the other: consequently, in such a county as Wayne, education among the masses has been. up to the present, at a low standard. The many have had to plod their way in darkness, while the few have wielded the political power, as is common everywhere under such circumstances, in favor of individual instead of in behalf of the community at large." For instance the school funds of the county. derived from various sources, have not been employed to promote the blessings of education: but, on the contrary, have rather constituted material to a set of rapacious hands at work in a jostling scramble to seize all without returning any equivalent whatever. Some borrowed in good faith and with honest intentions: others, perhaps, with fraudelent design from beginning to end. In some cases deficient securities, ginger-bread bonds, and statutory bars of limitation· in other cases, revolution, bankruptcy, misfortune and adversity: these combined, form such an anomalous condition of affairs with respect to the school funds of the past, that I am informed by the best, the purest and most intelligent of the county, that were all the notes and instruments of writing in connection, piled up and the consuming torch applied, the county would rather be benefited than otherwise by the results, which would give a new start on better principles, without having to struggle against clogs and shackles productive of nothing but further expense, annoyance, and further ultimate loss. But such circumstances, it is presumed, do not apply to Wayne county alone; many others may be in pretty much a similar condition.

Nothing much better could be expected from the loose arrangements and irresponsible conduct of the past. Strict accountability and "eternal vigilance" are the only remedies.

A constant application of these in the future will produce more wholesome fruits.

Among the better informed, with one or two exceptions of those who have ruled in the past, there is now an evident desire to foster education, even on Republican provisions. I have found that even among the very refractory of dispositions, the better part of human nature can be brought into play when satisfied that good intentions are the actuating motives; but if party zeal of proscriptive proclivities be manifest on one side, corresponding attributes of the same character will follow in virulence on the other side. Honest endeavors to promote the public welfare will assure a rivalry amongst individuals and parties as to which can laudably excel: but, on the other hand, if corruption and vindictive designs be the governing propensities, the rivalry for championship will be equally vigorous as to which can exercise the greatest amount of poisonous influence on public transactions. So far for general reflections. Now a few words on particular incidents of a more confined nature:

In reference to the tabular information, it is stated that there are fifteen public school in the county, and only six of these in which grammar is taught. It is necessary here to observe that on account of the backward state of education at the commencement, as yet there are no public schools entirely confined to grammar alone: and for the same reasons, wall-maps, globes and blackboards have not been brought into use for the county. Unfortunately, Wayne county has received no school donations, and on account of its poverty and the general desire to economize, and to make the best use of the funds, no expense have been encountered for the purchase of school sites: the private labor of parents interested having been so far sufficient to satisfy for the erection of school houses.

As yet there has been no special levy made for school purposes, but active steps are now being made by the Directory to have this necessary object accomplished forthwith. The cause of delay in this particular is owing to an insufficience of time, with a multitude of other opposing influences. Wayne was among the last of counties that got its Superintendent, because of a factious opposition· after which, much obstruction had to be contended with, on account of one man and a refractory Board of Supervisors. With regard to the Sixteenth School Sections, all of any value have been leased

PC93.468

long ago, for ninety-nine years, the money paid, and since recklessly squandered, with no probability of more than a fraction ever being recovered.

The aggregate value of the taxable property is about two hundred and one thousand three hundred and thirty seven dollars and five cents. The railroad lands and other property belonging, has this year been assessed to the amount of $3.500, but considerable doubts seem to be entertained as to the probability of collection, because of the plea set up as to railroad exemptions.

The number of schools for the next year will very probably be more than those of the present year, as business activity seems to be on the increase, as well as an augmented desire for education, with visible marks of general satisfaction with public school arrangements as at present: so much so that I am inclined to the belief that all will be disposed to contribute more cheerfully for this purpose than for anything else.

Thomas Hardy Hutchinson was first Supt. of Education of Wayne Co., Nebr. Ca. 1870 - He was born & educated in England - & came to U.S. about 1850. This document was on file in State Supt. of Education Office.